

Saint Paul ATARI Computer Enthusiasts

SPACE

An independent computer user group

NOVEMBER - 1984

Bytes From the Pres.

I thought I'd hold off writing this until after the Computer Show in case anything interesting happened. Alas, the show was more oriented to business use with little for us home users. However, the show probably yielded at least three or four new members, so it was worth manning a booth. At the courtesy of the Twin City Computer User newspaper, SPACE & TAIG shared the booth on the 27 & 28th. Bruce Haug and family and myself handed out about 100 SPACE flyers to passers-by.

The next show is the Computer User Fair on November 24. SPACE & TAIG will again share a booth. This time we're supposed to have available the "latest and greatest from Atari" according to the fair's organizer. I'm not sure what to do, so if you have suggestions please let me know. As always, volunteers will be appreciated. This should be a better show since it seems to be more user oriented. It will be at the Science Museum at 30 east Tenth Street in downtown St. Paul. Hours are 9:30 am to 6:00 pm. Cost is \$2.00/person or \$5.00/family. User group members will receive a discount if you bring your membership card.

We've had a little turnover in officers. John Benke defected to IBM so Bruce and Frank Haug will now handle both disk and tape of the months. My wife, Joanne, will pick up the secretary's duties from Bruce. See the first meeting minutes over in this issue! Also, Bill Sterling is giving up his post as paper/education software librarian due to a busy schedule.

Jim Schulz has agreed to take over at this meeting. Thank you Bill and Jim both.

It seemed to me that last month's swap meet was fairly successful. I think we'll have them about 3 times a year.

I will have the light pen demo at this meeting. See the review elsewhere in the newsletter.

There are a few new rumors afoot. Infoworld's Dvorak thinks that Atari's new computer will be a 16 bit machine based on the Motorola 68000. It will come with 128K, 600 x 400 graphics, 8 channel sound synthesizer and unknown number of colors. It will contain at least one 3.5" disk drive. Target price is an amazing \$300, but maybe that's without the drive. That's still amazing. Infoworld also reports that Atari is making good on a number of their debts. This is a good sign that maybe Atari will indeed survive. Another rumor I heard from Phil at TAIG is that Atari will keep the 800XL, but upgrade it to 128K and retain software compatibility. That would be terrific to me personally. Also, the price of 800's, etc., may not drop off before Christmas. So if the deal you want doesn't come along before Christmas, maybe it will afterwards.

The winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas will be on January 5 to 8. Is anyone going? Please let me know if you are. Perhaps I will go myself.

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BAD NEWS DEPARTMENT

TAIG has suggested that we have a common newsletter, or that we at least share articles more extensively. Does it have to come to this? Without more contributions of articles it will have to.

The Pres.
Bob Floyd

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

I do believe we are making progress. As you can see, this edition is really starting to amount to something. Keep it up, I know we can make this first-class newsletter.

It came up a while back that it would be really handy to have a new meeting place in which we could meet earlier. If you know of a place (preferably free) in the north-eastern suburbs, please tell a club officer at the meeting.

This is the latest version of the Atari service policy. (Reprinted from MACE)

For new merchandise, there will be over-the-counter exchanges for 90 days from the date of purchase. After 90 days, equipment will be repaired. This means that you will have to return your purchases where you bought them for exchange within the warranty period. If the merchant still has that particular piece of equipment in stock, you should be able to get an immediate replacement. After the warranty has expired, you can have your equipment repaired wherever you choose (at your own expense).

If you have an article to submit or have any questions about the newsletter please call me.

Jonathan Nelson (The Editor)

D.O.M. AND T.O.M.

This month we are running late again, due to the fact I don't want to use the TAIG disk for our own. It is made up of simple text games that could be written by anybody or copied from a library book that is 5 years old. We did get some programs donated last month, along with some digging on my part, we should have a disk and tape of the month for November.

Do any SPACE members have public domain Christmas programs, text, designs, or music that we could use for the December disk and tape of the month? If you do, PLEASE bring a copy to the November meeting.

Those of you who purchased the October disk, please stop by and get a label for it---my label program and printer are now compatible. The library program listing should also be available at this meeting. If you had trouble loading the program VARITAB last month, use the basic command ENTER instead of LOAD.

The disk/tape of the month contains programs from the club library. The tapes can be purchased for \$3 and the disks for \$4. The group makes a small profit from the sale of these which go toward supporting some of the things the group does. Each disk/tape usually contains eight to twelve programs. Most of these programs are games with some utilities and demos mixed in. The programs are obtained from trading with other user groups and from submissions from local members. Members who submit a program will receive a disk or tape of the month free! What a deal!!

--THIS MONTH'S PROGRAMS--
Unfortunately, the titles were not available at printing. The disk of the month may also be obtained by mail. Contact Bill Sterling at 291-7710 (eves.)

SynFile+ is probably the most powerful database program for AtariARI. It allows storage of vast amounts of information - up to 16 data disks for a given file are allowed. Plus, the search capability is very fast - about 2 seconds on a file with 260 records. Atari1050 type "double density" is supported. The files that are created are DOS 2.0 compatible, although I'm not sure you can use DOS file transfer to move a file to another disk. SynFile+ provides this capability within itself. Axion 128K Rampower and Mosaic 64K select boards are also supported. This allows indexing of larger files.

Records in a data file are broken up into fields. In a name/address data file, for each record you might have the following fields:

Name
Address
City
State
Zip Code
Phone Number

You might include some other fields of interest to you. Then you could use it to print up a phone listing, find all persons within a certain zip code or state, keep track of Xmas card mailing list, etc.

As I said, the search capability is very fast. This is because fields are indexed. Indexing does sorting in alphabetical order, plus storage of a few letters of desired fields for all records. This allows very fast searches when searching indexed fields. However, the price you pay for heavy indexing is reduced capacity of record storage for a given file. If the file is too big, you can easily break it down into smaller files. Typical maximum size of a file indexed on the first 2 letters of three fields is about

750. This should be plenty for most of us.

A place where SynFile+ really shines is in data entry and arrangement. The "create" function is very versatile in allowing customizing of your file for data entry and viewing. Special field types are allowed such as text (left or right justified), numeric, look-up (allows only certain entries), dollar, date, integer (left or right justified) and several others for specialized applications. Numeric and dollar fields can be totalled during printout for all or only records which meet the search requirements.

My main complaint with SynFile+ is the Report function. While it is capable of listing data or even making labels, it should have even more capabilities. The program supposedly supports multiple labels across the page. It doesn't do this very well because it inserts a lot of unnecessary spaces between labels. You might be able to print 2 labels across for names/addresses with a little luck. Luck is needed because SynFile+ doesn't allow editing of your label layout after a test printing. You must re-enter the whole label layout. There is also no provision for saving your label layout to disk for recall later. The insertion of text in your label layout for printout with the data is also not supported. One other annoyance is that there is no easy way to enter printer control codes. The only way I've found is to enter them with the title if you are using the "list" option. Otherwise, you must send your codes to the printer before booting SynFile+.

However, SynFile+ does allow dumping the output meant for a printer to a disk file that can be edited with a standard word processor such as ATARIWRITER. I've tried this with good luck, although lining things up can be a little difficult. I'm writing a BASIC

program soon that will read a file like this and allow a much more versatile printout per my desires listed above. See me in a few weeks or so if you'd like a copy.

One other thing you might be interested in is a conversion program that reads a datafile created with Softside magazine's database (recently mistakenly featured on TAIG and SPACE's disk of the month) to DIF format, which SynFile+ can read. That is how I converted about 160K of data for use on SynFile+. See me if you want a copy.

Overall, I'd still give SynFile+ a very strong recommendation. It really is a solid piece of software.

Tech Sketch Light Pen

Reviewed by Bob Floyd

I recently received the LP-10S Light Pen with Micro-Illustrator (M-I from here on) software from Tech Sketch Inc. As you probably know, M-I is the very impressive Graphics 7.5 software used by Koalapad and Atari Touch Tablet for drawing pictures on a TV screen. Standard compressed files (i.e., the .PIC files) are compatible between Tech Sketch and Koalapad, but Touch Tablet is not compatible with either. However, all files saved (filename is PICTURE) using the SHIFT-INSERT keys on the Storage Menu will be compatible with each other. I understand that you can load the file PICTURE back by using SHIFT-DELETE (I think?) on the Storage Menu. If you have questions, just ask at the meeting.

That's enough for software compatibility. How does it work? Light pens work by sensing the light from the TV screen. By keeping a close track of time from start of the electron beam sweeping the screen, the position of the beam

when detected by the light pen can be calculated. Since TV screens seem to differ somewhat, M-I has included an "alignment" feature on the Main Menu. This feature calibrates the light pen so it will line up with a cursor on the screen. Alignment is the first thing that M-I does after booting. Along with alignment is a feature called "inertia". This a sensitivity feature that determines how quickly and accurately the cursor follows the light pen's calculated position. Note that I said calculated position. Apparently, there is a lot of noise in the signal causing the cursor to jiggle quite a bit when drawing. By increasing the "inertia", jiggling can be reduced to the point where you can draw smoother lines in DRAW mode than with a touch tablet. This a very impressive feature and improved my drawing ability. I found I had better screen presence and could plan and position much better.

For those who don't want to know more about "inertia", please skip a couple of paragraphs. The inertia being used is probably mathematical filtering. Values being received are averaged with the previous filtered values using a weighting factor. A 60% filter would be 60% of the current value plus 40% of the previous filtered value. Or,

$$\begin{aligned}FV2 &= (.60 * V) + .40 * FV1 \\FV3 &= (.60 * V) + .40 * FV2 \\FV4 &= (.60 * V) + .40 * FV3 \\&\text{etc.}\end{aligned}$$

where FV = filtered value
V = value of pen
location

and FV1 = V for initial value

Different effects can be achieved by changing the percentage. More filtering (or inertia) is accomplished by using a lower percentage of the current pen value. Of course, this example can be used on a wide variety of things.

The Tech Sketch light pen worked very well on my Atari 800, but didn't work at all on my 48K 400. Before I describe my 400 problems,

let's discuss 800 performance. I found that all the features worked well and that I could draw better, except for a few small problems. First, I have not figured out how to take advantage of the "magnify" feature. I can't find my way around the whole picture. Second, the TV screen must be bright and you must use bright colors when drawing. In other words, don't try to use black as the background color (default is white). Otherwise, performance was impressive.

As I said, my 48K Atari 400 did not work. I was able to boot the program, but the required alignment procedure didn't work. The program could not sense the pen position. So, the program could go no further without the pen "getting lost". It didn't work on SPACE's 400 computer either. Both of these computers have the MACE 48K upgrade. They both have the GTIA chip, too, so this can't be the problem. My wild guess is that it is either the 48K upgrade or a difference in video signal quality between 400 and 800 computers. Does anyone have any ideas? I plan to test the pen on an 800XL prior to the meeting.

I am bringing my 800 along to demo the pen. Incidentally, Tech Sketch with M-I software retails for about \$70. They will make SPACE a special deal on a group purchase. So, if you have an 800 (or an XL?), you might be interested. I will talk to Tech Sketch about 400 computers after getting some feedback at the meeting.
(Editor's note -- Worked perfectly on my 800XL.)

October Meeting Minutes Joanne Floyd

The last SPACE meeting was held October 12. In the rumors department, Bob Floyd announced that a recent issue of Infoworld reported that Jack Tramiel may introduce a new MSX computer in January. Bob also noted that the last newsletter erroneously stated

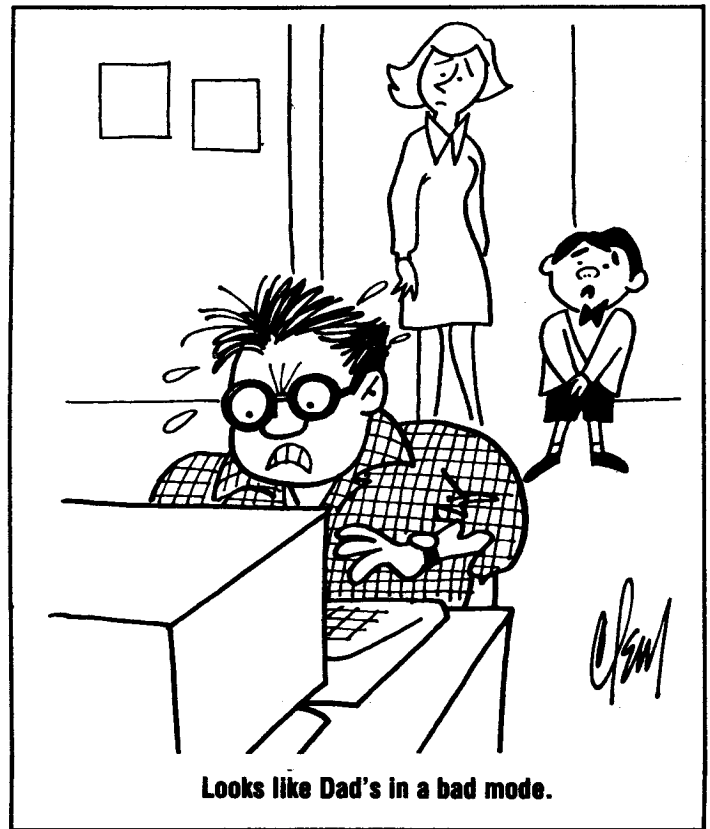
that the software company Synapse was going out of business---it is Synergistic, not Synapse, that is in trouble. In the vice president's report, Bruce Haug explained that he is taking over as disk librarian for John Benke. Bruce also reported, however, that unless people donate new programs to the club, there will not be enough material to produce new disks of the month. Max Feuer, the treasurer, reported that the club balance was approximately \$504, with 58 members paid and 13 members overdue to pay. Max handed out the newly designed membership cards.

In the new business section, Bob announced that the Twin Cities Computer User Exposition would be held October 25-28 and that the Science Museum was also planning a computer fair to be held at the end of November. Clubmember Joe Danko discussed information about hardware and software offers available from Centurian Enterprises and B & C Computer Visions. These companies are selling parts for 400 and 800 computers and 810 disk drives at very reasonable prices. They are also selling the Happy 810 conversion and several types of language, editing, and game cartridges. People interested in more information can call Joe after 6 PM at 777-9500.

It was learned that there are no authorized service centers for Atari any longer. This means there is no warranty work available at this time. However, there are still places to have your Atari serviced.

Several new hardware and software items were demonstrated. Gordy from Wizard's Work demonstrated the Ramrod XL with Omniview, a simple to install circuit board which allows you to alternate between 3 operating systems in the XL computer. It also increases keyboard responsiveness and allows 80 column screen output to a monitor. Steve Pauley from Computer Food demonstrated Synapse's

new program, Alley Cat. In this game, an adventurous tomcat leaps in and out of apartment windows, collecting gifts and prizes as he goes in the hope of winning the paw of a lovely female cat. While collecting the gifts, the cat must perform complicated feats of daring and avoid such harrowing dangers as prowling canines, vicious whisk brooms, and angry relatives of the female cat. (The path of true love is never smooth!) Todd Burkey from Soft Unltd. demonstrated Party Quiz, a trivia game that comes complete with 2500 questions and individual controllers for 4 players. The game can be played competitively or socially and it also provides an option for handicapping good players. Chris Tiggeman & Bob Krach showed their 128K ramdisk board for 800 computers. There was a little trouble, but this should be straightened out soon. Chris & Bob have not made final plans on what to do with the board, but hopefully there will be some sort of group function. When the demos were finished, the meeting was adjourned and a swap meet was held.



Interesting program →
Type it in and try it.

Try values: 7, 100, 200
1, 200, 200
2, 300, 500
5, 200, 200

For some interesting
results.

```

100 DIM ANSS(1)
200 GRAPHICS 8: ? "COLOR [0-14]": : INPUT
    COL.
300 SETCOLOR 2,COL,0: SETCOLOR 4,COL+1,
    4: SETCOLOR 1,COL,12
400 COLOR 1: CX=180: CY=80: DEG
500 PLOT CX,CY+70: INC=0
600 ? "R,VX,VY": : INPUT ROT,VX,VY
800 INC=INC+ROT
850 IF VX=0 THEN NX=INT(SIN(INC)*70): G
    OTO 1000
900 NX=INT(SIN(INC)*ABS(SIN(INC*VX))*7
    0)
1000 NY=INT(COS(INC)*ABS(COS(INC*VY))*
    70)
1100 DRAWTO NX+CX,NY+CY
1200 IF NX<>0 OR NY<>70 THEN 800
1300 ? "MORE? [Y/N] ": : INPUT ANSS
1400 IF ANSS="Y" THEN GOTO 200
1500 GRAPHICS 0

```

WANT ADS

For Sale: Atari 1025 printer. \$200
or best offer. Call 777-9500 after
6 PM. Will demonstrate.

Odds 'n' Ends

The Atari 800XL, \$99 by Christmas?
Could we have a printed list of the results
from that equipment survey?
Is anyone going to COMDEX fall 84? It's in
Las Vegas from Nov. 14-18.
Has anyone seen an inexpensive program to
dump graphics from Atari to Prowriter? A
good graph/chart generating program?
Could we get a couple of special interest
groups going? I want to know more about
machine language.

SynFile+ is a newly released database
program from Synapse software. The program
is neatly packaged with a nice 3 ring
binder and two disks. The first disk is a
good tutorial aimed at the beginner level.
The other disk is the program itself. The
program is written in machine language for
fast processing.

A database is a program that helps you
use your computer to store records. I am
using SynFile+ to keep track of household
inventory, names/addresses, medical
expenses, savings bonds, software
purchases, credit card numbers, etc. The
nice thing about a database program is that
you can sort records, search records by
category, add portions of some or all
records together, and print lists or labels
from your records.

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S.P.A.C.E. Membership Application

Name_____Phone_____Date_____
Address_____City_____State____Zip_____
Equipment/System-Used_____
Area of interest_____
Special skills, interest, info which might be shared._____

Optional
information: Occupation_____Employer_____

Dues: \$10.00 per year - please inclose check with application.

Mail application and dues to:
St. Paul Atari Computer Enthusiasts
748 Amber Dr., Shoreview, MN 55112

WANT ADS

Now it is possible for members to place 'Want Ads' in this newsletter. The ads may be for selling used hardware, used software, tutoring services, or just about anything that has to do with Atari. The rates are as follows:

6 Lines \$1.20 216 Letters
1 Line .25 36 Letters

The following is a list of advertising rates for vendors or individual members.

Full page \$18.00 7-1/2" X 10"
Half page 10.00 3-5/8" X 10"
Half page 10.00 7-1/2" X 5"
1/4 page 5.50 3-5/8" X 5"

All advertisements must be paid for when they are submitted. Deadline for ad placement is the last Friday of each month. To place ad or for more info, call the editor.

Bob Floyd . . . President 487-2627
Bruce Haug . . . Vice-Pres 774-6226
Bruce Haug . . . Disk Lib. 774-6226
Jim Schulz . . . Paper/Ed. Lib.

Jon Nelson . . . Editor 484-9027
Max Feuer . . . Treasurer 483-3895
Bruce Haug . . . Cass Lib. 774-6226
Joanne Floyd . . . Secretary 487-2627

TAIG Bulletin Board . . . 544-9058

TIPS 'N' TRICKS

Change the output of a program from the screen to a printer with: POKE 838,166 and POKE 839,238

Change output from printer to screen with: POKE 838,163 and POKE 839,246

In AtariArtist, place the cursor over the Atari logo in the upper left hand corner and press a button. Also in AtariArtist, press the INSERT key in the storage menu to save the present file in uncompressed form. It will automatically save it with the file name "PICTURE". Use DOS then to rename the file so you won't write over it.

What tricks have you found? Let us all know.

12/14 next meeting

St. Paul ATARI Computer Enthusiasts
2589 Fisk St.
Roseville, MN 55113

price under \$100

Revised direct connect modem \$150

Nov 24th at CCI Museum

85097214185
J. P. Scheib
2944 24th Ave. S.
Minneapolis, Mn. 55406

Next SPACE Meeting:
Friday, November 9, 1984
8:00 P.M.

Minnesota Federal Savings & Loan
Lexington Ave. near Larpenteur
Roseville, Minnesota